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ABSTRACT

With increasing numbers of mothers entering the workforce, interest has focused on which elements and conditions of maternal employment have predictable effects on children. This investigation assessed the relationship of maternal employment factors and selected maternal attributes (career salience, maternal role investment, and maternal separation anxiety) on kindergarten children's adaptive behaviors (pro-social behaviors, anti-social behaviors, academic competence, and psychosomatic behaviors) and dependency in children of kindergarten age. The subjects were 80 Caucasian mothers and their first-born children. The social competence of children was rated by their mothers and teachers; maternal attributes were reported and self-rated by the mothers. Analyses revealed that employed mothers perceived their children to be more hyperactive/distractible, more dependent, less academically competent, and less independent, than did unemployed mothers. Teachers perceived the children of employed mothers to be less altruistic than those of unemployed mothers; mothers high in career salience reported altruism, independence, and extroversion in their children whereas the children's teachers did not. (EAJ)

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The Relationship of Maternal Employment to Kindergarten Children's Adjustment

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This research was conducted under the direction of Dr. Ellen Hock, Professor, Department of Family Relations and Human Development, The Ohio State University.

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The Relationship of Maternal Employment to Kindergarten Children's Adjustment

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The relationship between kindergarten children's dependency, adjustment and social competence (i.e., prosocial behaviors, anti-social behaviors, academic competence, and psychosomatic behaviors) and maternal employment and attributes (i.e., the importance of a career and the maternal role to the mother, and her guilt or sadness at being separated from her child) was explored. The sample was 80 kindergarten-aged children who were part of a previous longitudinal study which began at birth (Hock., Gnezda, & McBride, 1984). Objectives of this study were to (1) understand the influence of maternal employment and related factors on adaptive and dependency behaviors in kindergarten children and (2) to examine these behaviors across time using significance tested crossed-lagged panel correlations for the analysis. Of 24 ratings only 5 were significantly correlated with maternal employment per se. Multiple Linear Regression Analyses revealed that maternal employment and attributes were significant predictors of 7 mother-rated and 2 teacher-rated child behaviors. Cross-lagged Panel Correlation Analyses indicated that children influence mothers as well as mothers influencing children across time.

In the United States more than half of the married women with children under one year of age are employed outside the home. The effects of maternal employment and the resulting time mothers spend away from their children have long been of concern. Employed mothers are no longer a group predominately composed of single mothers or mothers of older children. With increasing numbers of mothers entering the work force, interest has focused on which elements and conditions of maternal employment have predictable effects on children. Previous research on maternal employment has revealed few differences in child outcomes between children of employed mothers and those that are not employed outside the home.

The importance of intervening variables has been suggested in investigating maternal employment and child outcomes (Farel, 1980; Hoffman, 1989; Weinraub et al., in press; Gottfried et al., 1988; Owen & Cox, 1988). Determining the influence of maternal employment on child development has been difficult as the outcomes appear to be mediated by (a) family structures and resources, (b) child and maternal characteristics, (c) onset, duration, and hours per week of employment, and (d) age of the child (Hoffman, 1988).

Overview

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks relating maternal employment and attributes to child development include attachment theory which has been reported extensively in previous studies. Early psychoanalytic and ethological studies indicated that severe maternal deprivation was associated with difficulties in the child's development. Much of the concern about mothers accepting employment has centered on the amount of time they spend away from their children. Attachment theory has identified the mother-child relationship as crucial to the psychological and physical development of the child. Theoretically, the quality of the history of attachment

relationships in young children is associated with their early social development and exploratory behaviors. Secure attachment is facilitated by the availability and responsiveness of the mother. The implication is that securely attached children will be more open to learning and seeking new experiences. Therefore, children who develop secure attachments are thought to be more likely to become socially competent, adaptive and self-sufficient at home and in school. In particular, adaptive behavior (i.e., social competence and social adjustment) and dependency are variables thought to be reliable indicators of emotional security in children beyond toddlerhood.

Purpose

The purpose of this investigation was to assess the relationship of maternal employment factors and selected maternal attributes (i.e., career salience, maternal role investment and maternal separation anxiety) on adaptive behavior (i.e., prosocial behaviors, anti-social behaviors, academic competence, and psychosomatic behaviors) and dependency in kindergarten-aged children.

Method

Subjects

The subjects of the larger study were randomly selected mothers giving birth in three large, metropolitan hospitals and their infants. The 317 subjects were Caucasian, married, first-time mothers, and 20 years or older. The study reported here extended a 6-year research project (Hock, Gnezda, & McBride, 1984; DeMeis, Hock, & McBride, 1986) and examined 80 mothers and their first-born kindergarten-aged children. The entire sample for this study was part of the original sample. Attrition over the six years may have eliminated subjects who moved more frequently, and those wishing not to continue for other self-exclusion reasons. The family income range was from $16,000 to $135,000 at the time of this study. The mean educational level of the mothers was some post high school training.

Procedure

The social competence of children was rated by mothers and preschool teachers and again by mothers and kindergarten teachers. Mothers reported self-rated maternal attributes both when their child was in preschool and in kindergarten. Further, mothers reported maternal and family attributes at kindergarten age of the child.

Children's social competence and adjustment were correlated with maternal employment status at kindergarten age. Mothers' and teachers' ratings of kindergarten children were analyzed for gender differences. Additionally, the length of early continuous non-maternal care associated with maternal employment was analyzed for differences in kindergarten children's competence and adaptation. Maternal and family attributes were analyzed for their contribution to the child outcomes rated by both kindergarten teachers and mothers. Utilizing matched data, the maternal attributes and children's competence and adaptive behavior were analyzed across time from preschool to kindergarten.

The method of studying this problem was to interview the mother and request information on maternal attributes and child behaviors using questionnaires completed the by mother. Later with the mother's written permission the child's teacher was asked to rate the child behaviors. The mother was again interviewed concerning the child's school experiences, the family demographics and the family's child care arrangements.

Maternal attributes were measured by the Maternal Separation Anxiety Scale (Hock, 1984). Maternal Role Investment Scale (Hock, & DeMeis, undated), and the Career Salience Scale (Greenhaus, 1971). The child rating forms were the Child Adaptive Behavior Inventory (CABI, Version 2, Schaefer et al., 1984) and the Revised Beller Dependency Rating Scale (Beller, 1955; Sroufe et al., 1983).

Maternal Separation Anxiety.- Maternal separation anxiety was conceptualized and introduced by Hock and associates (Hock, Gnezda, & McBride, 1983). There are three distinct components. Subscale 1: Maternal separation anxiety represents a mother's level of worry, sadness, and guilt when separated from her child; her beliefs about the importance of exclusive maternal care; and her beliefs about her child's abilities to adapt to non-maternal care. The statements "I don't enjoy myself when I'm away from my child" and "Only a mother just naturally knows how to comfort a distressed child", exemplify the feelings of mothers who score high on this subscale. Subscale 2: Perception of separation effects on the child represents the mother's perceptions of her child's reactions to separation and the positive or negative effects on the child. It involves maternal beliefs that mother-child separation contributes to the child's social development by helping the child to develop interpersonal skills and to become aware of and accept diverse values, perspectives, and beliefs. A higher score indicates that the mother believes that her child is not comfortable and will not benefit from separation. Subscale 3: The third component reflects the mother's anxiety about employment-related separation decisions and assesses her attitude about balancing the maternal role and career investments that require mother-child separations. "I would resent my job if it meant I had to be away from my child" is a statement from a mother who is highly concerned about leaving her child in order to work outside the home. Balancing her maternal and employment concerns would be difficult for a mother high in this component (Hock, Gnezda, & McBride, 1983). Maternal separation anxiety is an important maternal attribute as mothers of necessity must integrate their own personal needs and the needs of their children.

Maternal Role Investment.- Maternal Role Investment (Hock, 1976) is defined by how a woman visualizes herself and the fulfillment she derives from the mother role. Further, it indicates the relative importance of being a mother in comparison to other aspects of a woman's life.

Career Salience Scale.- Career Salience refers to the value a mother places on her career, and indicates the time, attention and resources the mother is willing to expend on a career (Greenhaus, 1971). The pursuit of employment or a career is thought to reduce the number of hours a mother interacts with her child. On the other hand, working outside the home can provide satisfactions and self-fulfillment for the mother as well as increased family resources and activities. Supporters of maternal employment suggest that employment has a positive effect on the mother and improves the quality of the mother-child interaction.

Child Adaptive Behavior.- In this study, Child Adaptive Behavior includes social competence and adjustment. In order to measure the children's behavior both the mother and teacher rated the children using the eleven subscales of the Child Adaptive Behavior Inventory (Version 2, Schaefer et al., 1984). The 11 subscales are: Altruism, Depression, Expressive Talent, Hyperactivity/Distractibility, Somatic Anxiety, Academic Competence, Anti-Social Behavior,

Anti-Social Hostility, Independence, Apathy, and Extraversion. For example, a child high on adaptive behavior is likely to be perceived to exhibit altruistic behaviors, advanced verbal skills, academic competence, independence, and extraversion. Further, this child is less likely to exhibit behaviors associated with depression, hyperactivity and distractibility, somatic anxiety, anti-social behaviors, anti-social hostility, and apathy.

Child Dependency.- The Revised Beller Dependency Scale (Beller, 1955; Sroufe et al., 1983) was used to measure kindergarten children's dependency behaviors as rated by mothers and teachers. This scale includes child behaviors such as seeking help in self-management and social management, seeking contact, proximity, or recognition from adults, negative attention seeking, passive attention, and seeking positive attention. Dependency refers to the need for comforting, approval, and attention that results from valuing contact and interactions with others. Beller has reported that although the definitions of dependence and independence assume a negative relationship, the two concepts are not opposites (Beller, 1955). In this study both dependency and independence of kindergarten children are assessed.

Results

Maternal Employment Status.- Specifically the purpose of the first part of the investigation was to assess the relationship of maternal employment status to adaptive behavior (i.e., prosocial behaviors, anti-social behaviors, academic competence, and psychosomatic behaviors) and dependency in kindergarten-aged children. Mothers were separated into two groups: 1) those who were currently employed and 2) those who were not currently employed outside the home. The employment status of the mothers was correlated with the mothers' and teachers' ratings of child competence, adaptation and dependency. The data were analyzed to determine if maternal employment status had a direct relationship to children's behavior (Table 1).

TABLE 1

EMPLOYED MOTHERS AND CHILD BEHAVIOR RATINGS

Child Behavior (CABI) Rated by Mothers	
	$\underline{n} = 77$
	$\underline{r}$
Hyperactivity/Distract.	.26, $p<.02$
Dependency	.31, $p<.02$
Academic Competence	-.33, $p<.004$
Independence	-.37, $p<.001$
Child Behavior (CABI) Rated by Teachers	
	$\underline{n} = 70$
Altruism	-.25, $p<.04$

Employed mothers' perceptions of their children were different than unemployed mothers' in that employed mothers rated their children higher on Hyperactivity/Distractibility ($r = .26$, $p < .02$, $n = 77$) and Dependency ($r = .31$, $p < .02$, $n = 76$). Children high on Hyperactivity/Distractibility exhibit an inability to sit still or wait their turn. They are often noisy, talkative and easily distracted. Dependent children often enlist help with self-management and seek assistance with social situations. Additionally they seek recognition, initiate physical contact, and seek attention from adults. Further, employed mothers rated their children significantly lower on Academic Competence ($r = -.33$, $p < .004$, $n = 77$) and Independence ($r = -.37$, $p < .001$, $n = 77$). That means, mothers think their children don't work carefully or do their best in school. They also perceive that their children don't like to explore or investigate things. Additionally, employed mothers do not think their children were smart for their age or was quick at learning new things. Independence was characterized by children who did things for themselves, didn't ask for help, kept themselves busy with appropriate activities, and stayed out of the way.

The correlation of mothers' employment status and teachers' ratings of Altruism revealed a low negative relationship ($r = -.25$, $p < .04$, $n = 70$). Teachers rated children of employed mothers as less fair, less concerned for others' feelings and less willing to wait for a turn. Further, teachers found children whose mothers worked outside the home were less sympathetic when others were hurt, and expressed less kindness toward younger children. These limited significant correlations indicate that mothers and, especially, teachers do not perceive children differently based on their mothers' employment status per se.

Gender Differences

When the data were analyzed for gender differences there were no significant differences in ratings of child behavior outcomes for boys and girls except for teacher-rated Altruism. Further, mothers of boys and mothers of girls were not significantly different on employment status.

Mothers employed full-time and higher education.- It has been reported that mothers who have higher levels of education and who also have worked full-time for several years made more complimentary statements to their daughters (Bronfenbrenner, 1984). Do educated mothers that were employed full time, that is, 30 or more hours per week when their children were in preschool and kindergarten, have different expectations of their sons and daughters? All the mothers in this restricted group had high school or higher education. Mothers' ratings for Depression ($t = 2.38$), Somatic Anxiety ($t = -2.50$), and Dependency ($t = 2.78$) were significantly different in that employed mothers rated sons lower on Depression and Somatic Anxiety and higher on Dependency (Table 2). Depression, that is, appearing unhappy, worried, afraid, lonely, and not smiling or laughing often, and Somatic Anxiety, that is, exhibiting stomachaches, headaches, crying, complaining, or being upset, were rated significantly lower in sons. Or conversely, in this study daughters were thought to be more depressed and to express more somatic anxiety, and sons were rated significantly more dependent than daughters. Support for the hypothesis that mothers employed full-time over several years with at least a high school education are more complimentary toward daughters than sons was not confirmed in this sample.

TABLE 2

MOTHERS RATINGS OF BOYS AND GIRLS

Boys, n = 14; Girls, n = 15

	M	SD	RANGE	t
Depression				
Boys	7.4	1.4	5 - 10	-2.38
Girls	9.1	2.3	6 - 15	
Somatic Anxiety				
Boys	9.1	2.9	6 - 18	-2.50
Girls	12.1	3.5	1 - 19	
Dependency				
Boys	25.9	4.0	17 - 33	2.78
Girls	20.1	6.7	21 - 43	

One-sided, $t_{crit.}$ = 1.70, alpha = .05, df = 27.

Non-Maternal Child Care

Do continuous months of non-maternal care related to maternal employment in the first four years significantly influence kindergarten children's behavior as rated by mothers and teachers (Table 3)? As months of continuous non-maternal care increased so did teacher-rated Expressive Talent (r = .30, p < .03, n = 52) and Anti-social Hostility (r =.36, p < .01, n = 52). Expressive talent encompasses artistic talent, verbal skills, the ability to express ideas clearly, relate events, retell stories, and engage in entertaining conversations. Anti-Social Hostility is exemplified by being hot tempered, careless with truth, acting stubborn or irritable, taking others' things, and starting fights.

TABLE 3

NON-MATERNAL CARE

Child Behavior (CABI) Rated by Teachers	n = 52	r
Expressive Talent		.30, p<.03
Anti-social Hostility		.36, p<.01

Additionally, teachers' ratings of Hyperactivity/Distractibility approached significance (r =.27. $p<.057$). These data provided limited support for early continuous non-maternal care influencing child outcomes as rated by kindergarten teachers. There were no significant relationships with mothers' ratings.

Additional Maternal Attributes

In addition to maternal employment status, the contribution of maternal attributes and education were analyzed for variance in child behaviors using a step-wise regression model. The results are summarized in Table 4. Using the matched set of data (n=67) for the regression model and Hyperactivity/Distractibility as the dependent variable, mothers' employment (beta weight, 2.87, $p < .002$) and education (beta weight, -1.23, $p < .001$), yielded an R^2 of .21 ($p < .0005$). Increases in mothers' education reduces the rating. Employed mothers [R^2 of .11 ($p<.007$) with a beta weight for maternal employment of -1.40 ($p<.007$)] rate their children lower on Academic Competence. None of the other predictor variables contributed to the Academic Competence rating. Maternal employment (beta weight, -1.91, $p < .0002$) and education (beta weight, .41, $p < .04$) result in an R^2 of .20, ($F = 8.20$, $p < .0007$). Maternal employment accounted for .15 of the variance.

Maternal employment was a negative predictor variable in models for mother-rated Academic Competence, Independence, Altruism, and a positive predictor in Hyperactivity/Distractibility, Somatic Anxiety, and Beller Dependency.

A stepwise regression of Career Salience and employment status resulted in an R^2 of .13 ($F = 4.65$, $p < .01$) with both variables, Career Salience (beta weight, 0.07, $p < .01$) and maternal employment (beta weight, -1.42, $p < .03$), contributing equally to the variance with the dependent variable of mother-rated Altruism. Career Salience is a positive predictor.

The MSAS Subscale 1 with the child Depression variable resulted in an R^2 of .18 ($F = 14.16$, $p < .0004$). No other variables in the model were significant. With Somatic Anxiety as the dependent variable, MSAS Subscale 1 scores (beta weight, 0.34, $p < .0004$) and mothers' employment status (beta weight, 1.49, $p < .03$) resulted in an R^2 of .21 ($F = 8.65$, $p < .0005$). Subscale 1 accounted for $r^2 = .16$ of the total. The stepwise regression for maternal employment (beta weight, 4.22, $p < .004$) and MSAS Subscale 1 (beta weight, 0.64, $p < .001$) resulted in an overall R^2 of .23 ($F = 9.54$, $p < .0002$) in the model with Beller Dependency. In these models MSAS Subscale 1 was a positive predictor contributing to the anti-social child behavior ratings by the mothers.

Maternal employment and attributes were negative predictors in two teacher-rated child behaviors, Hyperactivity/Distractibility and Altruism . The stepwise regression of Hyperactivity/Distractibility resulted in an R^2 of .11 ($F=7.68$, $p<.007$) for MSAS Subscale 2 [beta weight -.49 ($F = 7.68$, $p < .007$)]. For Altruism maternal employment (beta value, -1.77) contributed to an R^2 of .07 ($F = 4.72$, $p < .03$).

TABLE 4

Multiple Linear Regression Analyses Predictions from Maternal Employment and Attributes to Child Outcomes

Child Outcome	Significant Predictors[a,b]	Total Regression[c] R	(R^2)
Mother-rated			
Hyperactivity/ Distractibility	Education***(-) Maternal Employment**	.46	(.21)***
Academic Competence	Maternal Employment**(-)	.33	(.11)**
Independence	Maternal Employment***(-) Education*	.45	(.20)***
Altruism	Career Salience** Maternal Employment*(-)	.36	(.13)**
Depression	MSAS1***	.42	(.18)***
Somatic Anxiety	MSAS1*** Maternal Employment*	.46	(.21)***
Beller Dependency	MSAS1*** Maternal Employment**	.48	(.23)***
Teacher-rated			
Hyperactivity/ Distractibility	MSAS2**(-)	.33	(.11)**
Altruism	Maternal Employment*(-)	.26	(.07)*

[a] Negative beta weight representing inverse relationships between significant predictors and outcome variables are given in parentheses.

[b] Education was coded 1 for less than high school diploma to 5 for a graduate degree. Maternal Employment was coded 1 = not employed, 2 = employed.

[c] Stepwise regression.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

TABLE 5

CROSS-LAGGED PANEL CORRELATIONS, DIFFERENTIALS AND MODIFIED Z-SCORES

Maternal Attribute	Mother-rated Child Behavior n = 69	Differential	Modified z[1]
Career Salience	Altruism	.27	2.99*
	Somatic Anxiety	-.40	-4.65*
	Anti-Social Behavior	-.21	-1.97*
	Anti-Social Hostility	-.26	-2.70*
	Independence	.18	3.29*
	Extraversion	.23	4.28*
MSAS - 1	Altruism	-.27	-2.96*
	Anti-Social Behavior	-.23	-2.14*
	Extraversion	.14	2.28*
	Beller Dependency	-.15	-1.73*
MSAS-2	Somatic Anxiety	.21	1.95*
	Extraversion	-.17	-2.19*
MSAS - 3	Altruism	-.30	-3.49*
	Somatic Anxiety	.24	2.82*
	Academic Competence	.16	2.69*
	Apathy	-.15	-1.88*
	Extraversion	-.24	-4.59*
MRI	Depression	-.24	-2.25*
	Beller Dependency	-.25	-.2.62*

[1] Significance-tested using a modified z -score, 1.65z = 0.495

Across time

Cross-lagged Panel Correlation Analyses of data from the current study and the matching data collected three years earlier were significance-tested using a modified z -score (Kenny, 1975). Table 5 contains the differentials and modified z-scores which use all six correlations. Mothers who valued their career highly when the child was in preschool rated their children high on three prosocial behavior at kindergarten age. The correlations were inverse on three negative child behaviors. The MSAS Subscales indicate a mixture of child behaviors and the majority are in the negative direction. Finally, the MRI results both negatively related to two negative child behaviors.

Discussion

Employment Status.- Children were rated by their mothers and teachers on 12 child behaviors. Of those 24 ratings only 5 were significantly correlated with maternal employment per se. Employed mothers perceived their children to be more Hyperactive/Distractible, more Dependent, less Academically Competent and less Independent. The increased value of children's independence in families with employed mothers has been reported with school-aged children, adolescents (Hoffman, 1989), and more recently with toddlers (Weinraub et al., in press). Hoffman (1989) further reported that employed mothers place a greater emphasis on children developing independence despite the age of the child. Teachers rated children of employed mothers to be less Altruistic. Children in a household influenced by the mother's work schedule may have less time or inclination to think of others. With the exception of Altruism, teachers do not significantly rate children differently based on their mothers' employment status.

Gender.- Mothers employed full-time perceived their daughters to have significantly more Depression and Somatic Anxiety than sons, and sons were rated as more Dependent than daughters. It would be interesting to pursue this finding to see if mothers expect more help from daughters, and if daughters respond with passive negative behaviors. The teachers' ratings did not reveal this difference in the school setting.

Non-maternal Care.- Non-maternal care associated with employed mothers was related to teachers' perception of increased Expressive Talent and Anti-Social Hostility in kindergarten children. These behaviors are similar to studies of pre-school children that found children in child care are more verbal, independent and less compliant with adults (Clarke-Stewart, 1989).

Maternal Employment and Attributes. - Multiple Linear Regression Analyses revealed that maternal employment and attributes (Maternal Separation Anxiety, Career Salience, and Education) were significant predictors of 7 mother-rated and 2 teacher-rated child behaviors. Employed mothers rate their children lower on prosocial behaviors (Academic Competence, Independence and Altruism) and higher on anti-social behaviors (Hyperactivity/Distractibility, Somatic Anxiety and Dependency). As the mothers' education level increased there was a mediating effect on Hyperactivity/Distractibility and Independence. Perhaps employed mothers expected more of their children, but increased education tempers those expectations in some areas. Additionally, the finding that employed mothers rated their children lower on Altruism was mediated by their highly valuing their careers. As mothers' general Maternal Separation Anxiety increased, so did their perception of their children's Depression. Employed mothers higher in general Maternal Separation Anxiety rated their children higher on Somatic Anxiety and Dependency. High levels of separation anxiety in the mothers may have increased their perceptions of these behaviors in the children or conversely, these child behaviors may have increased the mothers' anxiety.

Lower levels of Maternal Separation Anxiety, Subscale 2, account for a significant amount of variation in teachers' ratings of higher Hyperactivity/Distractibility in children. This finding may reflect the mothers' expectations that experiences with others may help their children adapt. Teachers' ratings of children with employed mothers were lower on Altruism which agrees with mothers' ratings.

The results suggest that employed mothers perceive their children's social competence and dependency differently than non-employed mothers. These behaviors are those that would be important to a mother balancing home and work responsibilities. The crossed-lagged panels suggest that children may influence mothers as well as mothers influencing children. Mothers high in Career Salience appeared to promote Altruism, Independence and Extraversion in their children and perceived these qualities in their children although these same behaviors were not reported by teachers. The mothers' career interests would be easier to implement if their children were well adjusted so they may be perceiving their children in a positive manner.

An increased understanding of changes in the family structure and relationships resulting from maternal employment and their association with child development is needed. Although maternal employment has few significant direct influences on children's behaviors, there are indications that employed and non-employed mothers perceive their children's dependency, social competence and adjustment differently.

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